A BROTHERLY EXHORTATION FROM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF *SCOTLAND*, To their BRETHREN in ENGLAND.

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A Brotherly Exhortation from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, *to their Brethren in* England.

THe many and great obligations which lie upon us in reference to our Brethren in *England*, who hold fast their integrity, and adhere to the Solemn League and Covenant, together with the desire which we have to testifie our Sympathie with them in their afflictions, and to preserve so far as in us lieth that fellowship and correspondence that hath been entertained betwixt the Church of *Scotland* and *England* these years past, do call upon us and constrain us not to be silent in this day of their trouble and distress.

Albeit the Lord (who hath his fire in *Zion*, and his furnace in *Jerusalem*) hath now for a long time past, afflicted these Kingdoms with many and sharp rods, and that his wrath seems not yet to be turned away, but his hand stretched out still; yet in all this, it becomes us who live in these Lands to stop our mouthes, neither can any impute iniquity to the most High.

It is rather a wonder, that any mercy should be continued, and that *England* and *Scotland* are not cut off from being Nations, seeing the back-slidings and provocations of both has been so many and so gross; Although the Solemn League and Covenant was sworne and subscribed by both, yet have many in both despised the Oath of GOD, as appears by the late unlawfull Engagement against the Kingdom of *England*, contrived and carried on by a prevailing party of Malignants

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in this Land, and by the proceedings of the Sectaries in *England*, in reference to Religion and Government.

We shall not insist upon what hath been the condition and carriage of the Lords People in this Land in reference to the late unlawfull Engagement: As we desire to magnifie the power and loving kindnesse of the Lord, who enabled all the Judicatures of this Church, and a considerable part of the Parliament, and the body of the Land, to dissent from, and bear Testimony against the same, which made the House of Commons in their Letter directed to the last General Assembly or their Commissioners, to declare, that that Engagement could not be looked on as a National breach; So we look upon it as a wonder of his Wisdom and Mercy, that he hath disposed and directed the same for the furtherance of his Work in our hand, and purging his House amongst us. All this cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderfull in Counsell, and Excellent in Working. Neither was it the least part of the Lords goodnesse to us, in that day of our strait that we were led in a plain path, and kept from complyance with Sectaries on the one hand, no less then with Malignants on the other. We have obtained this mercy to be stedfast to our old principles, in bearing free and faithfull Testimony against their proceedings, both in reference to Toleration and Government, and the taking away of the Kings life.

And as the danger and judgement which threatens the Authors and Abettors of these things, doth affect our Spirits with horrour, and maketh us desire that it may be given to them of God to repent: So we should conceive our selves void of Christian affection and compassion toward those in *England*, who suffer for the truth and Cause of God, if we were not very sensible of all their present troubles and calamities. It is no small grief to us, that the Gospel and Government of *Jesus Christ* are so despised in that Land, that faithfull Preachers are persecuted and cryed down, that Toleration is

eſtabliſhed by pretext of Law, and maintained by Military power, and that the Covenant is aboliſhed and buried in oblivion. All which proceedings, cannot but be looked upon as directly contrary to the Oath of God lying upon us, and therefore cannot eſchew his Wrath when he ſhall come in Judgement, *to be a ſwift witneſſe againſt theſe that ſwear falſly by his Name.*

Theſe things are the more grievous to us, becauſe (beſide many other wofull evils brought forth by them) they have interrupted the building of the Lords Houſe in *England*; the foundation whereof was laid by Oath and Covenant with the moſt High God, and followed for ſome years with many Declarations and Proteſtations of Faithfull adhering thereto, and with great expenſe of blood and Treaſure: Which things were to all the godly in theſe Nations a branch of hope, that the Lord would bring to perfection the Work of Uniformity (ſo far advanced in all the parts thereof) in theſe three Kingdoms.

But the great obſtructions and ſad interruptions that have been made therein, by the ſtrange and unexpected practiſes of many now in place and power in *England*, are to all the well-affected in both Kingdoms, and in all the Churches abroad, the matter of their ſorrow and humiliation. And if there be any place left for admonition, we Warn ſuch as have forgotten the Covenant, and deſpiſed the Oath of God, and turned aſide to lies and errour, to conſider whence they are fallen, and to repent. Proſperity and ſucceſs for a time are no warrantable evidences of a good Cauſe, nor ſufficient guards againſt the wrath of God; It is no good uſe of the Lords mercy for ſuch men under pretext of Liberty to make both themſelves and others ſlaves to corruption, & to make all men both in Church and State like the fiſhes of the Sea, or the creeping things that have no Ruler over them. Are theſe things according to the Word of God, and the pattern of the beſt Reformed Churches? Or is that the endeavour to bring the three Kingdoms

to the neareſt uniformity that may be in Doctrine, Worſhip, Government, and Diſcipline; Or is that the maintaining of the union betwixt the three Kingdomes, when the ſtraiteſt bond thereof is utterly diſſolved and quite taken away, and the fundamentall Government by King and Parliament wholly overturned? The juſt God who is of pure eyes beholds theſe things, and ſhall with no leſſe fury and indignation break the horn of theſe men, then he hath broken the power, and brought down the pride of Malignants before them, if repentance prevent not.

Amidſt thoſe fears and griefes, it is unto us matter of rejoycing, that there be many in *England* who mourn for all theſe abominations, and labour to keep their garments pure by refuſing to comply with that courſe of backſliding, and by bearing teſtimony againſt the ſame. And we hope the expectation of ſuch, ſhall not be diſappointed, but that the Lord will open to them a doore of hope for carrying on of his work, and making the lying ſpirit to paſſe out of that land.

And albeit many think no otherwiſe of the Covenant and work of Reformation, then as a mean to further their own ends; yet we are confident, that none who holds faſt their integrity, have ſo learned Chriſt, but are carefull to make conſcience of the oath of God lying on them; And we are ſure (whatever be the baſe thoughts and expreſſions of back-ſliders from the Covenant) it wants not many to owne it in theſe Kingdomes, who (being called thereto) would ſeale the ſame with their blood.

Although there were none in the one Kingdome who did adhere to the Covenant, yet thereby were not the other Kingdome nor any perſon in either of them abſolved from the bond thereof, ſince in it we have not only ſworne by the Lord, but alſo covenanted with him. It is not the failing of one or more that can abſolve others from their duty or tye to him; Beſides, the duties therein contained, being in themſelves law-

full, and the grounds of our tye thereunto moral, though others doe forget their duty, yet doth not their defection free us from that obligation which lyes upon us by the Covenant in our places and ſtations. And the Covenant being intended and entred into by theſe Kingdoms, as one of the beſt means of ſtedfaſtneſſe, for guarding againſt declining times; It were ſtrange to ſay that the back ſliding of any ſhould abſolve others from the tye thereof, eſpecially ſeeing our engagement therein is not only nationall, but alſo perſonall, every one with uplifted hands ſwearing by himſelfe, as it is evident by the tennor of the Covenant.

From theſe and other important reaſons, it may appear that all theſe Kingdomes joyning together to aboliſh that oath by law, yet could they not diſpenſe therewith; Much leſſe can any one of them, or any part in either of them doe the ſame. The diſpenſing with oathes hath hitherto been abhorred as Antichriſtian, and never practiſed and avowed by any, but by that man of ſin; therefore thoſe who take the ſame upon them, as they joyn with him in his ſin, ſo muſt they expect to partake of his plagues.

As we ſhall ever (God willing) be mindfull of our duty to the faithfull that adhere to the Covenant in *England*, having them alwayes in our hearts before the Lord, ſo we deſire to be refreſhed with their ſingleneſſe and boldneſſe in the cauſe of God, according to their places. This is the time of their triall, and the houre of tentation among them; bleſſed ſhall they be who ſhall be found following the Lamb, and ſhall not be aſhamed of his teſtimony. We know in ſuch dark houres, many are drawne away with the multitude, when the Lord will again purge and make white; And we doubt not but many ſuch are in *England*, whom the bold and clear preaching of Chriſt may reclaim; Much therefore lieth upon the Wath-men at this time, that their Trumpet may give a certain and diſtinct ſound, warning and exhorting every one, as thoſe that muſt give account,

count; And blessed shall those servants be, who shall be found faithfull in their Lords house, distributing to his houshold what is meet for this season, and can say they are free of the blood of all men, having shewen them the whole Counsell of God, being in nothing terrified of the threats of their adversaries. And blessed and happy shall that people be, that walk in the light holden forth by them, and staye upon the Lord in this dark time, harkning to the voyce of his servants, and walking in the light of his word, and not in the sparks of their owne kindlings, which will end in sorrow. How inexcusable will *England* be, having so soulie revolted against so many faire testimonies, which the Lord Christ hath entred as Protestations to preserve his right, in these ends of the earth long since given unto him for his possession, and of late confirmed by Solemne Covenant. Christs right to these Kingdomes is surer then that he should be pleaded out of it by pretended liberty of Conscience, and his begun possession is more pretious to him, then to be satisfied with a dishonourable toleration- All that yet we have seen, doth not weaken our confidence of the Lords glorifying the house of his glory in these lands, and of his sonnes taking unto him his great power, and raigning in the beauty and power of his Ordinances in this Island. His name is wonderfull, and so also are his works, we ought not therefore to square them according to our line, but leave them to him who hath the government laid upon his shoulder, all whose wayes are judgement, and whose ruling these Kingdomes had never yet reason to decline. It is good for us to be stedfast in our duty, and therein quietly to wait and hope for the salvation of God. The word of promise is sure, (and hath an appointed time) that he that will come shall come and will not tarry. There is none hath cause to distrust the Lords word to his people; It hath often to our experience been tryed in the fire, and hath ever come forth with a more glorious lustre. Let not therefore these that suffer in *England* cast away their confidence,

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hey are not the first who have needed patience after that they had done the Lords wil. But let them strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, and say to the fearfull in heart, be strong, fear not, behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence, he will come and save you. Now the just shal live by faith, whereas these that draweth back, or become lukewarm in the Lords work, his soul shall abhorre them, and he shall spue them out of his mouth. But we perswade our selves of better things of these our brethren in *England*, and prayeth that the God of Peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepheard of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, may make them perfect in every good work to doe his wil, working in them that which is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be Glory for ever, AMEN.

A. Ker.

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